



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

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## **Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to Central Wisconsin Center, St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center and Meriter Hospital**

**Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries**

**Madison** – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that the Central Wisconsin Center, St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center and Meriter Hospital will each receive a \$20,000 grant to help prevent worker injuries. The grants are part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"These organizations provide valuable services in meeting health care needs for the south central part of the state," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will help these facilities and their employees continue to provide essential care by preventing injuries on the job. Health care workers can suffer serious back injuries when moving patients, which can end careers and undermine patient care."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers and these combined factors can increase the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall.

Governor Doyle developed the *Safe Lifting Initiative* as part of Grow Wisconsin, his comprehensive plan for economic and workforce development. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding the demonstration projects.

The demonstration projects were selected with guidance from the Select Committee on Health Care Workforce Development. The committee's mission is to identify and help implement top-priority, immediate and long-term strategies for addressing the health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled is a state institution, located in Madison, for people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Central Wisconsin Center is owned and operated by the Department of Health and Family Services and will train 180 employees on proper use of safe lifting equipment.

St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, serving South Central Wisconsin since 1912, offers a variety of health and wellness services. St. Mary's plans to train 115 employees under the project.

Meriter Hospital is a 448-bed non-profit community hospital that provides comprehensive health services. It is a major teaching affiliate of the University of Wisconsin and the fifth largest hospital in Wisconsin. Meriter will train 233 employees.

The projects are in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, Inc.